Homeland Heroes: Migrants and Soldiers in the Neoliberal Era

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Abstract: This paper examines the dynamic relationship between neoliberalism and nationalism through the counterintuitive comparison of journeys travelled by US citizens as they enlist in the military and by unauthorized Central Americans as they migrate to the United States. We argue that, however different the context and content of their decisions and their lives, Central American migrants and US soldiers are both connected within a larger political economy. We complicate the idea of migrants and soldiers as purely rational economic actors, but we also reject the idea, imputed onto migrants and soldiers by neoliberal states, that they are naturally nationalistic actors. Migrants and soldiers embody a neoliberal subjectivity produced through processes of violence, capital accumulation and militarization. Yet, as we examine throughout this paper, their construction as homeland heroes within the national imaginary masks the ways their labor and their mobility serve the institutionalization of neoliberal statecraft.

Resumen: Este documento examina la relación dinámica entre el neoliberalismo y el nacionalismo a través de la comparación contraintuitivo de viajes recorridos por los ciudadanos de EE.UU., que se alistan en el ejército y los centroamericanos no autorizados que emigran a los Estados Unidos. Nosotros sostenemos que los migrantes centroamericanos y los soldados estadounidenses están conectados dentro de una economía política más amplia, incluso a pesar de la diferencia en el contenido de sus decisiones, de sus vidas y de sus contextos. Nos complicamos la idea de los migrantes y los soldados como los actores económicos puramente racionales, pero también rechazamos la idea, imputada a los migrantes y los soldados de los Estados neoliberales, que son actores naturalmente nacionalistas. Los migrantes y los soldados encarnan una subjetividad neoliberal que se produce a través de procesos de violencia, la acumulación de capital y la militarización. A medida que examinamos en este documento, su construcción como héroes de la patria dentro de las máscaras de imaginarios nacionales las formas de su trabajo y su movilidad servir a la institucionalización del arte de gobernar neoliberal.

Keywords: neoliberalism, nationalism, transnational migration, militarization, auto-ethnography

Introduction

Just after dusk on 3 December 2010, a Boeing 747 landed at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, not far from the nation's capital (Whitlock 2010). Seven uniformed, white-gloved US soldiers escorted three flag-draped coffins from the plane to a procession to the mortuary. Against the cold breeze, an Air Force chaplain prayed for them. In solemn silence, meant to convey the government's respect for the fallen, stood Marine General James E. Cartright, national security advisor

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Thomas E. Donilon, and other officials. A short distance beyond, families witnessed the ceremonial return of their loved ones. Out of view from media personnel, at the request of family members seeking privacy, uniformed soldiers escorted a second group of three flag-draped coffins. Of course, these were not the only soldiers' caskets to make this return journey. The war in Afghanistan had become increasingly dangerous for US service personnel since 2001, peaking in 2010 with the posthumous return of 499 dead American soldiers.

A few months earlier, in the broad daylight of 5 September 2010, a Mexican military plane touched down at the international airport in Comalapa, El Salvador, just outside the nation's capital. From the depths of its cargo hold, uniformed Salvadoran soldiers escorted 11 flag-draped coffins to a ceremony in the plane hangar. A still Salvadoran flag and soldier in dress uniform stood behind the podium of President Mauricio Funes. In front of him, a tearful audience sat in white plastic chairs. These family members of the fallen endured the periodic flash of cameras that documented their grief and, after the speech, the handshakes that express the president's sympathies for their loss. Men in black suits folded the flags and presented them to each family, conveying the official condolences of the Salvadoran government and its gratitude for their sacrifice (CNN 2010). Yet these heroes were not lost during military duty. These were men and women whose sacrifice was measured by their decisions and experiences as would-be migrants to the United States. For many, this sacrifice is first tested along the migratory route across Mexico, which has become increasingly dangerous since the intensification of the drug war in 2006. An untold number of Salvadoran migrants never made it to their destinations or returned home, their remains lost forever in mass graves dug by criminal gangs across Mexico or stranded in the Arizona desert.

Separated by thousands of miles and the circumstances surrounding their deaths, these Salvadoran migrants and US soldiers were nevertheless connected in a larger political economy, and the similarities between the state-governed spectacles that glorify their loss hint at this connection. Their homecomings mark the final chapters in a longer trajectory where migrants and soldiers embody a neoliberal subjectivity produced through processes of violence, capital accumulation and militarization. We understand subjectification as a process involving both state projects and forms of self-governance and agency that optimize neoliberal ideals of productivity (Ong 2006).[1] As we examine throughout this paper, soldiers' and migrants' construction as homeland heroes within the national imaginary and everyday cultural landscape masks ways their labor and their mobility serve the institutionalization of neoliberal statecraft in transnational contexts. Yet, as we also discuss, the making of homeland heroes becomes a point of contestation and resistance by individual actors.

The experiences of migrants and soldiers offer insights for understanding the making of those strange bedfellows, nationalism and neoliberalism. They also highlight the ways neoliberal governance shapes everyday life. Central American nation-states have come to view emigration and migrant remittances as key for their survival, as they cope with the economic dislocations and constraints generated by neoliberal policy (Burgess 2009; Gammage 2006; Hernandez and Coutin 2006). In this context, migrants are charged with representing an ethnic loyalty and work ethic abroad, while institutionalizing markets at home. Meanwhile, US soldiers forcefully institutionalize a particular vision of freedom abroad, while representing gendered

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notions of responsibility and success at home. At the same time, on the homefront, unprecedented rates of people are contained and excluded through mass incarceration and deportation. Such processes become embedded in the ways the United States preserves the illusion of national cohesion and post racial harmony under conditions of economic crisis and growing inequality.

To expose the socio-political dynamic between nationalism, neoliberalism and the everyday people caught in their crosswind, this paper compares and contrasts the journey travelled by US citizens as they enlist in the military and the unauthorized migration journey travelled by Central Americans. These decisions can be understood not only as the beginning of metaphysical journeys, marking rites of passage in their respective societies, but also embodied journeys that take people across great physical distances and potentially into real physical danger. We argue that, however different the context and content of these choices, the decision to enlist in the military and the decision to migrate to the United States may both be conceptualized within larger systems of social and economic uncertainty. We complicate the idea of migrants and soldiers as purely rational economic actors, universally and purely motivated by material self-interest.[2] However, we also reject the idea, invoked by neoliberal states, that migrants and soldiers are naturally nationalistic actors.

Thus, we gain insights on the role of nation in the neoliberal restructuring of state and society. We begin the analytical journey to these insights with a brief discussion of our methodological approach, and we introduce the pervasive logics of nationalism in a neoliberal era. In doing so, we examine how the nation-state attempts to rewrite the meaning of migrants' and soldiers' decisions as patriotic. We then show how nation-states, in their struggle to cope with neoliberal processes, construct both migrants and soldiers as its ambassadors, glorified as protectors of the homeland through their transnational mobility. Nation-states not only fashion soldiers and migrants as heroes; the state's failure to shield citizens from market forces also produces strong symbolic and material incentives for soldiering and migrating. The symbolic violence of poverty and the glorification of sacrifice disproportionately draw marginalized people into the path of violence, whether they are US military recruits or Central American migrants. Gendered notions of honor, as well as the reality of foreclosed economic opportunity, inform these decisions. In this discussion, we focus primarily on migrants from El Salvador, because the Salvadoran nation-state has been particularly outspoken in its courtship of its diaspora. Nevertheless, economic dependence on migrant remittances has spurred similar initiatives and interest in emigrants as citizens around the globe.

Finally, to explore the role of neoliberalism and militarization in the production of this violence, we juxtapose national scripts of protecting and invading the homeland. Militarized foreign policy and border enforcement produce new forms of profit from soldiers and migrants, as private military and incarceration contractors win lucrative government contracts. Under the latest stage of neoliberal restructuring, states have increasingly focused on the containment of backlash and border security in ways that mark the bodies and lives of migrants and soldiers alike. As the national security agenda targets undocumented migration, we see that

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neoliberalism and nationalism not only reinforce state borders and economic inequality, but also blur the boundaries between victims and perpetrators of violence.

Methodology and Theoretical Contribution

This paper is an exploration of an auto-ethnographic idea. One of the authors of the paper served in the US military, enlisting at the age of 17. While motivations are complex, an initial impulse for enlistment had been a desire for respect and a wariness of her station in life, as a woman, as a high-school dropout, as a low-wage worker. The adventure of the military promised a way to test inner fortitude and physical endurance, a proof of worth and an escape from boredom. Many years later, while listening to Central American migrants on the trail to the United States through Mexico during doctoral research on violence, she was frequently reminded of a soldier's pull toward danger and adventure. She recognized the notions of brotherhood and noble sacrifice that permeated migrants' attitudes. A similar discourse of courage and community infused the routinized suffering of migrants en route to the United States. Meanwhile, the other author of this paper also travelled the migratory route during her doctoral research, interviewing migrants about the abuses they had endured during their journey north. These migrants' narratives resonated with the stories of US war veterans that she had collected in Arizona during graduate school. As veterans pieced their lives together in the aftermath of Iraq and Afghanistan, they told tales of suffering, violent dislocations, and despite it all, hope for a better tomorrow. But how do we make sense of the echoes of the lived experience of former soldiers in the interviews of migrants?

Whatever the resonance of the initial idea with our personal experiences working with both migrants and soldiers, the comparison of two such radically different realms as US military enlistment and Salvadoran migration deserves some justification. Neoliberalism is a fluid process of ordering, disordering and reordering state–society relations, attended by a legitimizing individualizing ideology. In equal doses utopian and cynical, its pervasive accompanying ideology obscures the integral role of the state and state violence in perpetuating markets. Thus, neoliberalism can be understood as an atomizing hegemonic discourse (Harvey 2005:3). At the same time, neoliberal governance is flexible and particular to specific contexts and localities, composed of dynamic political and cultural formations (Ong 2007). Thus, by thinking about neoliberalism not as a singular structural force or discourse, but rather an ongoing renegotiation of "state, market and citizenship" (Wacquant 2012:71), we may trace its pervasive logic in everyday life.

To this end, we examine the multiple subjectivities forged as migrants and soldiers move from spaces of social exclusion to social inclusion; as they pursue individual strategies to overcome their own social and economic precarity, migrants and soldiers inadvertently contribute to the political legitimacy and economic stability of neoliberal statecraft. Remittance-senders and soldiers deployed to occupy, protect and rebuild foreign and domestic economies and infrastructure embody ideal neoliberal subjectivities of personal responsibility, thus unwittingly perpetuating systems of inequality and violence.

However, migrants and soldiers also become potent symbols for the nation, embodying a patriotic ideal. Nationalism obscures the role of violence in the

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perpetuation of political communities. At first glance, nationalism might initially seem like a competing ideology to neoliberalism. After all, third world nationalism has periodically stymied the progress of economic liberalization and privatization (Harvey 2005:84–85). And imagined communities, rather than individuals, are the heart of nationalist projects (Anderson 2006 [1983]). However, nationalism has not just survived the neoliberal era. In nationalism, nation-states find solutions for coping with precarious surplus populations. Indeed, David Harvey (2005:86) explains that nationalism has become "the neoconservative solution to the contradictions of neoliberalism"; neoliberal states have harnessed nationalism to justify coercive measures necessary to implement the market revolution, divide the working classes with false flags and invoke competitiveness in the global marketplace. Thus, nationalism is also a malleable process that perpetually reorders the state–society relationship.

That state–society relationship is fluid, continually imagined and reimagined, with its own shifting borders. Indeed, discursive and material practice constitutes the nation-state (Mountz 2010:xxiv). In state narratives, the dominant image is coherence in governance when, in reality, the state is a collection of contradictory, improvised and often disrupted responses to events (Mountz 2010:xxv). The processes of neoliberalism and nationalism shape these state narratives, delimiting possibilities for the state and citizenry, and vice versa. By revealing the intersection of these processes and their co-constitutive relationship with the state and its ideal citizens, we ultimately challenge the coherence of the nation-state, and as a result, "enable the conjuring of new transnational imaginaries" (Mountz 2010:xxv).

If we wish to reveal the intersection of these two processes, an analysis and linking of superficially unconnected social worlds, such as the lived experiences of Central American migrants and US soldiers, provides a key analytical opportunity. For this reason, we conceptualize the pairing of enlistment decisions and migration decisions as an encompassing comparison, which, according to Charles Tilly (1984:83), "places different instances at various locations within the same system, on the way to explaining their characteristics as a function of their varying relationships to the system as a whole".[3] In other words, the intellectual payoff of an encompassing comparison of the decisions of migrants and soldiers is neither a universal postulate nor a generalizable model of human decision-making. Rather, it provides an opportunity to reflect upon how our positions in an ever-emergent, fluid neoliberal political economy shape our decisions and their meaning. Thus, in this encompassing comparison, we lay the groundwork for a larger ethnographic project.

Beyond this paper, we ultimately hope to juxtapose lived experiences from various locations within the same global political economy, explaining the internal logic of decisions as a function of varying relationships to the dynamic and disorienting processes unfolding within that system. The inductive, ethnographic component of our comparison is key to understanding neoliberalism and nationalism as unresolved processes, rather than structures. Understanding the complex reality faced by the people who actually make migration and enlistment decisions points to the limits of structure for understanding human choice, highlighting both the overdetermined and indeterminate nature of perpetually emergent social

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structures. In this vein, our work among migrants has been intensive, spanning years of fieldwork along transnational routes from Central America through Mexico.[4] In the future, we envision equally intensive fieldwork gathering oral histories of soldiers for this purpose. Future work will better incorporate these voices into the analysis. This paper is an invitation to that encompassing ethnography, but not a final word on it.

Patriotic Myths, Neoliberal Models

Patriotic myths and neoliberal models produce both migrants and soldiers, in the sense that these ideas give meaning to violence perpetuated and violence endured. As archetypes in their respective societies, both migrants and soldiers embody ideals of agency: resourceful men facing violence with bravery, discipline and a sense of duty. Migration journeys and wars can both be conceptualized as rites of passage and spaces of liminality marked by strong sense of *communitas, courage and sacrifice*. Migrants and soldiers search for respect, guided by notions of upward mobility, service and community, albeit in very different ways.

Both the migrant journey and war require physical and mental stamina to survive. Of course, poverty also requires physical and mental stamina to survive, but it is not celebrated as such. Instead, from a neoliberal worldview, the poor are victims of their own shortcomings, rather than agents in their own survival. The insecurity of poverty produces stress, but it is a stress experienced without agency. It is suffering without purpose. As such, the danger inherent in poverty does nothing to dispel the monotony of life in poor communities. A lack of upward mobility, few recreational and educational opportunities and poor access to noble careers makes the experience of poverty both anxiety ridden and mind-numbingly boring. By contrast, popular depictions of the danger and violence of combat or labor migration celebrate masculinity, dignity and purpose, even when the firsthand experience of such violence can be humiliating and disempowering for soldiers and migrants. On the disconnect between popular representations of the masculinity of soldiers and the emasculating lived experiences of soldiers, John Robert Adams (2008:2) explains that "... war provides society with definitions of manhood, while, simultaneously, men experience war as the antithesis of society's definition. Something has to break somewhere, and it's usually the men." As will be discussed in greater detail in the sections to follow, many popular and state-produced narratives of the migrant and the soldier's plight represent great adventures and tests of endurance.

The ability to frame suffering through the lens of agency and the availability of these experiences to the common man makes them ideal fodder for national mythmaking projects. Such myths refocus the public eye away from the failure of the state to provide economic and physical security for its citizens. They also mask the ways the labor of migrants and soldiers are crucial to domestic and transnational economies. Thus, the soldier and the migrant come to play important symbolic roles for the nation-state; they embody neoliberal success born out of the very failures that produced them. At the same time, migrants and soldiers may internalize this narrative as they justify their own decisions to enlist and to migrate in what becomes a dialectic of enabled survival and ennobling sacrifice.

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Making Migrants

Both state and criminal violence along the Central American migrant trail through Mexico to the United States has escalated dramatically. In addition to the banditry, exploitation and rape that plagued the route during an earlier migration era, these migrants now run a gauntlet of organized kidnappings, warring cartels and sex trafficking to arrive in the United States. To give a sense of the scale of the violence, the National Human Rights Commission of Mexico (CNDH) estimates that more than 20,000 migrants may have been kidnapped in 2010 alone (CNDH 2011). For this reason, one Guatemalan youth, resting in the shade of a boxcar that carries the poorest and most vulnerable undocumented people north, declared that, "the route is like war" (Brigden 2012). If the migrants succeed in arriving at the US–Mexico border, they face the threat of drone surveillance, helicopters, armed border patrol, movement sensors, vigilantes, bandits and even US National Guard troops. Not coincidentally, lessons from US military deployments have informed these border policing tactics, and lessons from border control have been exported to foreign military interventions (Dunn 1996; Heyman 1999). As Central American men, women and children navigate the low-intensity conflict terrain at the border, they learn the art of camouflage, and upon command from their guides, dive to the ground "like soldiers" in enemy territory. Furthermore, militarization is no longer confined to border regions, as the multi-billion dollar security industry, including the Mérida Initiative and the Central American Regional Security Initiative, train, fund, and equip military and police units throughout Mexico and Central America. Charged with the task of fighting drug trafficking, such transnational security projects militarize major transportation routes, pushing migrants deeper into the grips of organized criminals and human smugglers as they navigate their journeys (Vogt 2013). Indeed, Salvadoran migrants, and their Guatemalan and Honduran counterparts, must negotiate a new kind of battleground to get to the United States.

Salvadorans brave this violence to save their families and themselves from the economic and physical vulnerability produced by neoliberal policies in the region. They leave home to find lives of dignity and agency. During the decades of political violence from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, refugees streamed north from the region, fleeing authoritarian regimes and civil conflict supported by militarized US Cold War aid and intervention (Garcia 2006; Hamilton and Chinchilla 1991). The peace that followed failed to establish a semblance of socio-economic equality or an enduring sense of physical security (Moodie 2010). As post-conflict El Salvador experimented with open trade and dollarization, crime escalated and the flood of people north accelerated again. In response, the regime enacted a series of heavy handed "mano dura" (iron fist) policies modeled on the post-9/11 US response to internal threat. These policies criminalized street culture, marginalized youth associations, and stigmatized returned migrants as alleged gang members (Coutin 2007; Zilberg 2011). A cycle of police repression, incarceration, emigration, deportation and gang violence fueled social unrest and continues to undermine economic opportunity for the working class. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP 2011), El Salvador has the second highest per capita homicide rate in the world, exceeded only by the social violence that has recently

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engulfed Honduras.[5] Thus, the violence migrants experience along the journey must be understood as relational to the structural and direct violence they endure in their everyday lives at home.

Within the context of this precarity and violence, migrants make sense of their journey through a prism of sacrifice for their families and future. A "routinization of suffering" gives meaning to the dangers met along the migrant trail (de Leon 2012; Spener 2009). In Mexico and Central America, popular songs, film and stories herald the bravery, nobility and martyrdom of migrants (Marroquín Parducci 2008; Sheridan 2009). Bands, like the famous Tigres del Norte, sing traditional Mexican corridos about masculine labor, romantic love and loss, adopting the art form to tell the stories of migrants who brave the desert and bandits for a better life. Across the Caribbean basin region, Hip Hop artists have also expressed righteous anger at mistreatment of migrants in their lyrics (Marroquín Parducci 2008). For migrants, these popular depictions of migrant suffering both express and inform their willingness to risk everything to arrive in the United States. In this cultural and economic context, migration can be justified as a noble sacrifice and understood as a rite of passage, rather than adventure seeking for its own sake (Kandel and Massey 2002:982). Moreover, in some cases migrants do not even aspire to arrival, but construct their migration in terms of escape, fleeing the unbearable economic and violent conditions of life in El Salvador. As one Salvadoran migrant explained, "El Salvador is like a prison. The only way to gain liberty is to escape" (Vogt 2013).

While migrants understand their own motivations through the prism of their individual and family needs, public discourse increasingly frames emigration and financial remittances in national rhetoric. The Salvadoran nation-state, with its hands tied by dollarization, the political power of multinational firms and its own economic elite, has reinterpreted the survival strategies of the poor as a potential national strategy for economic development and government legitimacy. In 2012 El Salvador received $3.9 billion in remittances, accounting for 17% of the country's GDP (Maldonado and Hayem 2013:20). With one-third of all households on the receiving end, these so-called *migradólares* become the "ideal neoliberal currency" for states that reap the economic benefits of absent citizens (Hernandez and Coutin 2006:201).

For this reason, the neoliberal state attempts to co-opt the image of migrant suffering as an image of national sacrifice. The ceremonial repatriation of migrants killed by Mexican drug gangs is only one example of this propaganda. Benedict Anderson (2006 [1983]:9) has argued that, "[n]o more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs to the unknown soldier. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely because they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times." Similarly, monuments to migrants living abroad are "saturated with ghostly national imaginings" (Anderson 2006 [1983]:9). In 1994, the Salvadoran government constructed one such monument along the highway connecting the capital city and the airport; it is a set of tall arches marked with a plaque that reads "Hermano Lejano Bienvenido" ("Welcome Far Away Brother"). This monument represents migrants as politically and economically present in the nation, and in the words of Susan Bibler Coutin (2007:9), "producing ghostlike

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renderings of clandestine persons". In the context of escalating violence along the migratory route, the Hermano Lejano is El Salvador's tomb of the unknown soldier.

Around the same time as the construction of this monument, the Salvadoran government began a process of political incorporation of the diaspora that continues today (Coutin 2007). Following the lead of Mexico, El Salvador established programs to court its citizenry abroad. In October 1999, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the General Directorate of Attention to the Community Living Abroad (DGACE) to extend government services to Salvadorans abroad (Coutin 2007:91). A web of Salvadoran consulate offices continues to grow across Mexico and the United States, providing some service and advocacy for living migrants, and facilitating the repatriation of deceased migrants. In February 2014, Salvadoran citizens living abroad voted from long distance in presidential elections for the first time. Meanwhile, the World Bank and its intellectual allies encouraged efforts to cultivate remittances through the incorporation of diaspora (Coutin 2007:124), because it constitutes a development strategy compatible with its austerity agenda (Burgess 2009; Hernandez and Coutin 2006; Pedersen 2013:253–260).

Harnessing social currents that celebrate the selfless suffering of migrants, both the Salvadoran and US governments applaud the hardworking people who send money home. High-level Salvadoran officials convey a keen awareness of the economic role of the migrant, often explicitly celebrating the contribution of their compatriots and extolling the fabled Salvadoran migrant work ethic (Coutin 2007:147). The "transnational immigrant entrepreneur" has received accolades from US officials as well, eulogized as courageous evidence of the survival of an American dream, despite the difficult social reality of a neoliberal and militaristic era (Pedersen 2013:250–255).

Despite this official celebration, the image of the hardworking immigrant periodically morphs into the specter of the dangerous criminal. The aggressive deportation program under the Obama administration, coupled with negative media attention, creates new insecurities for immigrants after they arrive in the United States, contributing to what Cecilia Menjívar and Leisy Abrego (2012) call "legal violence". Moreover, the vulnerabilities and hardships immigrants face do not end once they have been expelled from the United States. When deported, migrants face a stigma of gang membership, and upon their return, have been subjected to surveillance, police harassment, and vigilante violence. They have failed their duty and become the object of a US–Salvadoran "neoliberal securityscape", rather than the subject of national adulation (Zilberg 2011). Thus, governments vilify and exclude deportees as the human waste of this human export economy (Coutin 2007:171).

Not surprisingly, the dominant construction of the migrant national hero has been masculine: the brave breadwinner, the far away brother. Similarly, the dominant construction of the migrant national villain has been masculine: the criminal deportee. National mythologies and their attendant "rites of passage" are gendered mythologies. Across the globe, nationalistic discourse of female sacrifice has long focused on the role of mother in the homeland (Nagel 1998:256). In Central America and Mexico, scholars have described a machismo/marianismo ideology that legitimates female subordination to men, thereby concealing the harsh

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economic inequalities that confront women (eg Ehlers 1991). Men prove their worth through violent and risk-taking behavior, and women prove it by enduring their men (Hume 2008). Thus, the good woman sacrifices her own sexual and economic freedom to maintain the home to the benefit of her husband and his progeny. Due to their traditional economic marginalization and dependence on men, the most important rites of passage for Latin American women have been marriage and childbirth, not migration or war. In contrast to male migrants who send money home from their adventures abroad, Salvadoran women who left the homeland were traitors to the national cause, because they abandoned the cultural reproductive role at the hearth. Indeed, the return of failed migrant men, emasculated through their deportation from the United States, together with the absence of mothers who leave children behind, have been coupled as the purported cause of pervasive violent crime, the pressing security problem for the Salvadoran nation-state. The causal emphasis on deportees and family disintegration masks the role of violence in producing emigration, shifting focus to how emigrants produce violence (Coutin 2007:165). Moreover, the moral panics that accompany deported men and "bad mothers" quickly betray the role of emigrants as crucial to the national economy.

Despite the gendered stigma for returned men and absent women, the labor market has responded to the twin processes of deindustrialization and globalization. Thus, women increasingly view migration as a livelihood option and over the past two decades, unprecedented numbers of women have entered the global economy (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Sassen 2001). Roughly 20% of Central American migrants are female (Castro Soto 2010:16). However, increased participation by women in the migrant labor force has not occurred on the same terms as male participation. Spectacles of violence have erupted along the migratory route, as Central American migrant women have been targeted for rape, kidnapping and trafficking. Thus, gendered notions of honor, sexual morality and changes in a gendered political economy condition the decision to migrate, but they also expose women to special risks during their migration journey (Castro Soto 2010).

Making Soldiers

If the migrants' journey is like a war, contemporary US military enlistment is a transnational journey. A longstanding system of Cold War military bases, an indefinite War of Terror, and the frequent development of new geopolitical hotspots suggest that the likelihood that a recruit travels the globe is very high. At least 170 countries have hosted US military personnel since 1950 (Holmes 2014:1–3). Amy Austin Holmes (2014:3) has called this unprecedented global military base system with outposts in ostensibly sovereign states, "the most quintessential aspect of the American empire". Thus, even in peacetime, joining the US military often involves international travel through the US base network. Enlistment is not only a coming-of-age adventure, but the beginning of a transnational imperial expedition.

In the United States, young people undertake this journey for a complex mixture of social, economic and moral motives (Gutmann and Lutz 2010). An important, though not singular, part of this equation is the desire to escape economic

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precarity. Deindustrialization, the destruction of labor unions and the elimination of social safety nets have exacerbated this precarity. In this context, military enlistment is widely perceived as an opportunity for people who cannot otherwise pay for college and an employer of last resort. However, while entry standards change in response to military manpower needs, many poor people become ineligible for service based on prior felony convictions, low educational attainment, or poor health. Moreover, despite the ease with which they could meet enlistment requirements, very few US elites enlist (or receive a commission) in the military (Lutz 2008). As family income reaches the highest percentile, propensity to enlist decreases (Lutz 2008:178). Given the clear economic pattern to migration and enlistment, it would be tempting to lean on a purely rational economic explanation of why people make these decisions.

However, gendered patterns of enlistment complicate purely rational economic models of migrants and military recruits. Despite the fact that women earn substantially less than men in the civilian labor market across the Americas, men are most likely to enlist. Military service and migration have both been described as "rites of passage". The military has traditionally been viewed as a masculine social world. Both the civilian workforce and the US military have opened very haltingly to women over the last century since the post-World War II retrenchment of men in the public sphere. In 2011, 14.6% of active duty US military personnel were female (Parrish 2011), a close approximation to estimates of the proportion of Central American migrants who are women.

This increased participation by women in the military labor force has not occurred on the same terms as male participation. Like their migrant sisters who defy traditional roles to embark on the long journey from their Central American homes, female soldiers also brave spectacles of sexual violence; a series of high-profile scandals involving the rape of US servicewomen by their own coworkers have made headlines (Steinhauer 2013). Thus, gendered notions of honor and changes in a gendered political economy condition the decision to enlist, but they also expose women to special risks during their military service.

Race and gender also intersect in military recruitment. In stark contrast to black men and white women, black women are now "overrepresented" among military recruits as a proportion of their civilian population (Dao 2011). As minority men are channeled into prisons, black women face the most bleak workforce position, the drawdown of the social safety net and their vilification as unworthy recipients of welfare: the "black welfare queen" (Nadasen 2007). In this context, black female military participation can be understood as a move from a position of national exclusion to a place of inclusion.

Military service and citizenship claims have a long relationship, strengthened by the mass conscription during World War II. As recipients of the original GI Bill, constructed as a program for *deserving* citizens, a generation of young men benefited from their call to duty and came to feel a sense of civic pride (Mettler 2005). In a society where government social programs have been limited by austerity, military service exempts recipients of entitlements from a stigma of dependency and sloth. This civilian context helps explain why black women report some of the highest rates of satisfaction with military life (Lundquist 2008), despite lingering sexism

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within the ranks. In this context, military enlistment provides black women an opportunity to draw on a nationalist imaginary to overcome the social stigma and material deprivation produced by the implicit convergence of racism, sexism and neoliberalism. Throughout US history, the symbolic reward of military service has been a major draw for marginalized citizens, who have used this national responsibility to claim status (Levy 2007:202).

Whether the benefit is prestige or financial, new recruits, like migrants, often make sense of their enlistment through a prism of sacrifice for their families and future. Despite the fact that throughout US history many soldiers understand their own motivations through the prism of their individual and family needs, public discourse has long framed military service in national rhetoric (Krebs 2009:156). The idealized citizen-soldier narrative may be internalized, alongside other motives, such that most soldiers discuss both public and personal rationale for their military service (Krebs 2009:165). In polls, new recruits often indicate the importance of "duty" in their decision (Krebs 2009:166). The nation-state thereby reinterprets the survival strategies of the poor through the lens of national security and bestows politically expedient strategies with a special legitimacy. Giving voice to the citizen-soldier narrative and reaping symbolic capital through its enactment, soldiers themselves are often knowingly or unknowingly complicit in this process.

Whether a sense of national duty is performed in good faith or bad faith by soldiers, the state co-opts the image of soldiers and military service as an image of national sacrifice and patriotism. The ceremonial repatriation of soldiers killed in combat is only one example of this propaganda. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery in Washington DC is the United States' Hermano Lejano.

Army slogans reflect the ideological shift that has accompanied the neoliberal transformation of state–society relations. In the 1970s until the election of President Reagan in 1980, widely seen as a milestone for the neoliberal movement, recruitment slogans emphasized the collective nature of service: "Today's Army Wants to Join You." In 1980, however, the slogan extolled individual agency and personal transformation, urging recruits to "Be All That You Can Be." In 2001, as the world reeled from the unraveling utopianism that accompanied the Washington Consensus and embarked on a new age of warfare, the recruitment slogan for the US Army became "An Army of One." Thus, the ultimate neoliberal soldier is atomized, standing alone for brotherhood and the nation. Most recently, since 2006, recruits have heeded the simple call to become "Army Strong."

Meanwhile, the Army has institutionalized a core of seven values, understood to represent the ideal soldier to which a recruit should aspire: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage. The slogans and the Army list of values manage military image, perpetuating an aura of nobility for the uniform. In fact, the 2007 US Department of Defense self-consciously titled its public relations program "Why We Serve: The Nobility of Service" (Krebs 2009:165). That aura of nobility renders neoliberalism and nationalism compatible, emboldening refugees from neoliberalism and re-constituting them as national ambassadors.

If the soldier has become a national and neoliberal idol, criminal prisoner has become a disposable citizen, easily cast into a contained exile within the penitentiary

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system. Harnessing social currents that celebrate the brotherhood and bravery of men at arms, the US state applauds its uniformed personnel, while continuing to vilify and exclude the unfortunate poor who become ineligible for service through their involvement in the underground economy, discarded as the human waste of a new economy. Class processes of exclusion from the military work in concert with the institutional racism that Michelle Alexander (2010) describes in the mass criminalization and incarceration of men of color in the United States following the 1970s War on Drugs. It is no coincidence that as incarceration rates of Latino males rose, rates of Latino military service have declined (Fry 2009:iv). Likewise, since the institutionalization of the all-volunteer force in the post-Vietnam era, enlistment requirements such as high-school diplomas and felony background checks have been an impediment to the enlistment of black men (Armor 1996:15). Nevertheless, from a class standpoint and the perspective of the more privileged, the military serves as a "dumping ground for society's unwanted and otherwise unemployable youth" (Gutmann and Lutz 2010:189). Thus, for the working class of the United States, there are two violent pathways that they may potentially travel: one leading to the military industrial complex and the other to the prison industrial complex. We ask then, are these not two sides of the same coin in the logics of disposability? As an indication of this perverse and pervasive logic, contractors have reaped unprecedented profits from fungible expertise and investment in military, prison and immigrant incarceration projects (Feltz and Baksh 2012; Loyd et al. 2012; Welch 2000).

Protecting and Invading the Homeland

The sacrifices that come to define homeland heroes are most praised in their absence from the homeland, as they leave families behind and risk their lives. If and when heroes return, the experience of absence often lives on, in traumatic nightmares, in families ruptured, in bodies altered. Combat veterans experience survivor's guilt and continuing impulses to violence, symptoms of both moral and psychological damage (Sherman 2010). Similarly, migrants express feelings of corruption and shame from their experience of violence in transit, and their long awaited reunions with family may be marred by domestic violence, cultural shock and accusations of infidelity.

These "invisible wounds" notwithstanding, the bodies of both US soldiers and Salvadoran migrants are also visibly "marked" (Wool 2013) upon their return, often through parallel processes of violence and injury. The disfigured bodies of migrants who have had their limbs severed by moving freight trains in their journeys across Mexico mirror the images of US soldiers dismembered by improvised explosive devices (IEDs), the weapon of choice in contemporary counterinsurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan. In migrant communities across Central America, stories of people who lost legs falling from the notorious freight train used by the poorest migrants north have become well circulated legends, and the dangers of the journey have become inextricably associated with the image of amputated limbs. When migrants' journeys end in death, the ultimate mark of violence, the repatriation of their corpses becomes a vehicle through which states reassert their sovereignty

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(Magaña 2011:160). The transfer of their bodies homeward, like the pageantry that accompanies the return of fallen soldiers, becomes an idiom through which states generate legitimacy.

Yet, it is in the mirror image of these embodied subjectivities that the structural inequalities between the United States and El Salvador comes into view. While the support system that receives them remains fraught with issues, wounded warriors with honorable discharges return to the United States to state-sponsored reintegration and rehabilitation programs. Some veterans experience a newfound sense of empowerment as their narratives of survival, endurance and sacrifice receive praise from politicians and media; they describe their military service as a "privilege" (Krebs 2009:166). In contrast, dismembered migrants return home to El Salvador with even less prospect of finding appropriate medical attention or prosthesis, employment or state support, their disposability more apparent than ever. Albeit in very different ways with different consequences, both migrants and soldiers come to physically embody the larger neoliberal processes of violence that produce them.

This encompassing comparison, and its exposure of the mirror image of the soldier and the migrant, demonstrates the compatibility of nationalism and neoliberalism. The pervasive logic that underlies this relationship is thrown into stark relief when national guard personnel deploy to the border, and armed US soldiers stalk, apprehend and contain Central American migrants under the guise of protecting the homeland. Between June 2006 and July 2008, President Bush deployed 6000 National Guardsmen to the border for Operation Jump Start, and a total of 30,000 National Guard personnel played a supporting role for these operations, including air support (GAO 2011:12). From June 2010 to June 2011, an additional 1600 National Guard troops served in Operation Phalanx along the US border (GAO 2011:13). These deployments augment the normal operations of the US border patrol. These deployments demonstrate Presidential resolve to close the border to illicit flows, but they are costly and both Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security personnel have expressed concerns about their efficiency. Thus, the militarized escalation of border policing becomes a farce of state functions, played to a domestic American political audience (Andreas 2000).

The performance is also invariably a tragedy, set on a global political stage, in which Central American migrants bear a greater burden of risk than the US National Guardsmen and the migration agents who patrol them. Indeed, the number of deaths of migrants approximates the casualty statistics for US soldiers deployed to a combat zone. Between 2001 and 2014, Operation Enduring Freedom claimed the lives of 2304 US soldiers, and 2170 of those soldiers died in Afghanistan (DOD 2014).[6] According to estimates by the US Customs and Border Patrol, between 1 October 2001 and 30 September 2012, 4678 migrants crossing the southwest border of the United States lost their lives, many of them perishing from exposure to fierce desert conditions (CBP 2012). To put the risk confronted by migrants into perspective: the southwest border zone death toll is more than double the number of US soldiers killed in Afghanistan since 2001.

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These homeland heroes are turned against one another when soldiers patrol the border. In that moment of confrontation, global inequalities based on race, citizenship and power come to the fore. In this "gray zone" (Levi 1989), where soldiers represent both victims of and collaborators with violent institutions, internalized racial, class and gender oppression becomes an instrument of national power. The state rewrites the scripts that everyday people use to understand their migration and enlistment decisions to justify this violence against migrants. Thus, at the borders of nations, the boundaries between victims and perpetrators of violence become blurred. In that defining moment, we see clearly the social fragmentation begot by the pairing of nationalism and neoliberalism.

Redefining Heroism

Nevertheless, this social fragmentation and marginalization is not destiny. The ongoing processes of nationalism and neoliberalism leave potential openings for resistance as migrants and soldiers return home. In this process of reintegration, veterans and returnees must resolve their newly ascribed status as national heroes against the cascading inequalities and violence they continue to live. For example, in the United States in the aftermath of war, the visibility of yellow ribbons, plastic bracelets and discourses of heroism and "Thank you for your service" serve as cultural codes that veil the realities of combat, suicide, sexual abuse and addiction that travel home with soldiers/veterans. Some veterans involved in anti-war movements find solidarity and purpose in undoing these cultural myths, while also capitalizing upon them as symbolic resources to enter the political fray (Goss 2013:40; Gutmann and Lutz 2010).[7] Heroic cultural codes enable protest actions by veterans, such as throwing military service medals to reject the legitimacy of the wars in which they themselves participated (eg Wisniewski 2012).[8] Status as a patriotic veteran can also be an asset for aspiring politicians, represented in electoral campaigns as dutiful servants of the public will (Krebs 2009:166).

Similarly, the identity of the "hermano lejano" is multifaceted. Human rights advocates in El Salvador actively challenge the negative stereotypes associated with deportees (Coutin 2007:41). Across the global South, emigrant communities have funded political agendas and community development programs from the United States. Other migrants have financed their own campaigns and capitalized on their status as a migrant with successful transnational experience to gain elected political positions in their homeland, representing themselves as capable bridge-makers between everyday people and elites (eg Smith and Bakker 2005). These victories, however, are limited to the "successful" immigrants who return home victoriously with luck and privilege, not the multitude of people who fail to arrive or achieve their goals abroad.

Thus, while migrants overwhelmingly suffer displacement upon return, the ongoing processes of nationalism and neoliberalism leave open some opportunities for soldiers and migrants to rearticulate the cultural capital of heroism in relation to the state. These processes, though real and forcefully shaping the lives of individuals around the globe, are contested. Their ultimate destination, like the destinations of individual migrants and soldiers, remains uncertain.

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Conclusion

At face value, nationalism and neoliberalism are contradictory processes and ideologies, but in practice, they have found a mutual accommodation. Neoliberalism is a process that invokes an individualizing ideology that obscures the role of violence in the perpetuation of markets; it continually disorders and reorders the relationship between society and the state in capitalist creative destruction. Nationalism is an ongoing process of communal imagining that obscures the role of violence in the perpetuation of that community; it naturalizes borders and state institutions and reifies the relationship between state and society. Rather than emphasizing a universal model of sovereign consumers in a free market economy, nationalists understand their community as limited, excluding culturally and/or racially different others, and sovereign, governed by a legitimate state (Anderson 2006 [1983]:6). In the aftermath of the Cold War, the rise of nationalist and ethnic movements across the globe could be understood as part of the backlash against dis-embedded capitalism, as well as the end of bipolar rivalry. However, nationalism has emerged as a midwife to the next phase of neoliberalism, as neoconservatives emphasize militarized containment and authoritarian responses to these dislocations (Harvey 2005:84–86).

A look at the lives of soldiers and migrants provides insights into the intersection of nationalism and neoliberalism. Decisions to enlist are influenced by both the impact of neoliberalism and nationalism. The nation-state has come to view emigration/remittances as a way to survive the neoliberal era and cope with its surplus population. Likewise, the US nation-state has come to view incarceration and military enlistment as ways to survive a neoliberal era, and these containment strategies have been harnessed for profit. Young people, caught in the perpetual economic disordering and re-ordering of a neoliberal economy, seek respect and solidarity through participation in violence, and in the case of soldiers, this quest is channeled into the service of a grateful "nation".

These decisions are social processes. The motivations of migrants and soldiers are complex, and they evolve over time. Static rational economic models do not capture the process behind these decisions or the many layered meanings that inform the choice to leave home, whether leaving home means service in the military or migration north. Nor are these decisions pure expressions of patriotism, as the idea of the nation-state suggests. They are a quest for respect and agency, informed, but not determined by, the symbolic and material categories of gender, race and socio-economic class. Neoliberalism shapes individual subjectivities through these categories, disproportionately empowering or disempowering some actors to imagine their choices differently. The analytical coupling of migrants and soldiers makes this social reality visible.

Endnotes

[1] More specifically, by neoliberal subjectivity, we mean the ongoing process of becoming a "responsible" and "self-help" economic actor who shoulders the blame for his socio-economic position (Pine 2008:12–17); it is the unfinished acquisition of a rationality that "makes sense" of the inequalities that take shape in everyday practice, but without challenging such inequalities. Central to this neoliberal worldview is an emphasis on the

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behavior of the atomized individual, as opposed to the role of national or local community or circumstance, as the determinant of socio-economic destiny.

[2] Neoliberal economic policy assumes that individuals have a consistent preference ordering and respond to material incentives (DeMartino 2000: 39). This assumption leaves no room to explore how preferences change over time or across different cultural and structural contexts. Furthermore, there is no room for true altruism or transformative social process in this atomized model.

[3] It is worth noting that Tilly (1984) famously studied large social orders with encompassing comparison, not decisions, but this method nevertheless proves useful for our purpose.

[4] We conducted this fieldwork independently between 2006 and 2013 for our doctoral dissertations, under the supervision of IRB at our respective institutions. Our methods included semi-structured interviews, participant observation and volunteer work at migrant shelters located along the route. We both worked as shelter volunteers for over a year where we met and interviewed hundreds of migrants. Ethnographic fieldwork was also conducted with student veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan as part of a larger project between 2007 and 2008.

[5] Official Salvadoran government statistics report a dramatic decrease in homicides since the FMLN and Catholic Church brokered gang truce between the MS 13 and M18 gangs. However, some analysts have questioned the validity of body counts and the sustainability of the truce (Robbins 2013).

[6] Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn claimed an additional 4467 US military fatalities.

[7] Several important memoirs have been published by military veterans who critically reflect on heroism, military service and their own political transformations. See, for example, Glenton (2013) and Waters (2006).

[8] On forms of theatrical protest during the Vietnam War, from which contemporary veteran activists often draw a symbolic repertoire, see Goss (2013:40). In that era, the public recognition of the patriotic soldier provided a key resource for GI resistance, and anti-war veterans self-consciously cultivated an image of "the soldier in revolt" and built bridges between soldier and civilian activists.

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